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RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 1049  
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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IT](#) [IS](#) [PA](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY PUSHING TO ALTER EU PEACE PROCESS STATEMENT

Classified By: DCM Elizabeth L. Dibble Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Israel Palestinian Affairs office director, Davide La Cecilia (protect), told poloff Italy is working hard to alter the language of the Swedish-proposed EU statement on the peace process currently being circulated in advance of the December 7-8 GAERC meeting. La Cecilia said the GOI is disturbed by several elements: the reference to Jerusalem as a future capital of a Palestinian state, the encouragement of a unilateral declaration of statehood, the lack of a push for other Arab states to be more helpful, and the fact that it does not recognize Israel's recent moratorium on settlement construction as an important step that can lead to the restart of negotiations. The draft instead encourages the Palestinians to reject the Israeli move, and hardens their position, in his view. He said Italy is working hard to "soften the edges" of the current draft, which Italy also feels would "stick its finger" into the peace process and would not be supportive of current US efforts.

¶2. (C) Poloff noted the significance the US places on the Israeli moratorium, as well as on the Secretary's reference to the 1967 lines in her November 25 statement. La Cecilia was interested to learn that this reference went further than previous US statements of policy, noting that the Quartet had referenced the 1967 lines in its September 24th statement (albeit not as a basis for negotiation). La Cecilia noted that Italy considers the Israeli moratorium on settlement construction significant and positive, and a sufficient condition for the restart of negotiations.

¶3. (C) FM Frattini plans to travel to the region on December 9 "to support the PA Presidency and acknowledge the steps taken by Israel," according to La Cecilia. He will meet both PM Fayyad and President Abbas, should both be available, as well as PM Netanyahu and FM Leiberman. La Cecilia noted Abbas' difficult predicament, and commented that should efforts to arrange a prisoner swap for Gilat Shalit succeed with Hamas, it would further weaken President Abbas.

¶4. (C) Comment: Italy's helpful support for the Peace Process has been an ongoing feature of its Middle East policy under PM Berlusconi and FM Frattini, motivated in no small measure by a desire to be close to the US in its policy outlook. As Israeli Amb. Gideon Meir told Amb. Thorne on December 1, the Italians are helpful to us because "they want to be close to you."  
THORNE